

Stakeholder Group Meeting Thurston County Mineral Lands Project

Tuesday, August 21, 2018
1:00pm – 3:00pm
Thurston County Courthouse Complex
Building 1, First Floor, Room 152
2000 Lakeridge Dr. SW, Olympia

Mineral Resource Lands Overview and Q&A

Allison Osterberg gave an overview of where we currently are in the mineral resource lands update.

- The mineral lands stakeholder meeting serves as a sounding board and to stimulate discussion and alternative areas of research. The group has met previously 5 times, discussing the inventory and classification update and designation of mineral resource lands. In this meeting, the stakeholder group is discussing policy for mineral resource lands.
- There are 4 main steps in the mineral lands update: 1) identify and classify; 2) designate; 3) conserve; and 4) permit. Steps 1, 2, and 3 are all part of the Comprehensive Plan Update. Currently we are in step 3, which is to create new and revise existing policies to conserve mineral resources and ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses.
- Since the last meeting, staff have had several work sessions with the Board of the County Commissioners.
 - Staff briefed the Board of County Commissioners on the Planning Commission recommendation on May 16, 2018. The board requested more information regarding options around the 1000-foot separation distance.
 - Staff presented these options to the BoCC on May 22, 2018. The BoCC requested specific examples of how the 1000-foot separation distance could be handled in the policy level.
 - Further conversations were had on May 31 and June 5.
 - On July 24, a majority of the Board of County Commissioners approved staff to move forward with the Planning Commission recommendation, unchanged, but to evaluate policy options for the 1,000-foot separation distance. Additionally, the Commissioners asked staff to further evaluate the definition of a public park and preserve that exists in the current designation criteria.
- Draft chapters release have been delayed to the fall. Once draft chapters are released, staff will begin work sessions with the Planning Commission, and following that a public hearing will be held on the comprehensive plan.

Mineral Resource Lands – Overview of Code Updates

Two code updates are currently in progress.

1. Commissioner's request to consider 1,000 foot separation distance in policies

The Commissioners approved staff to evaluate certain scenarios that may allow mining within the 1,000-foot separation distance at the policy level. Two policy options regarding this were discussed at the Mineral Lands Stakeholder meeting on May 24, 2018. They include:

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- How are partially designated parcels handled at the site level? One option proposed is a designation threshold: A parcel that is partially designated and meets a certain minimum amount could mine the entire parcel, including any amount within a 1,000-foot separation distance.
- Expansion of existing operations. Staff are exploring a policy option that would allow existing mining operations that lie on designated mineral lands to expand onto neighboring parcels that are not designated, including those within a 1,000-foot separation distance.

2. Staff review of 17.20 Mineral Extraction Code

Internal staff within planning and other departments in the County are currently reviewing the mineral extraction code. Some recommendations were reviewed in this meeting. Maya stated that we plan to hold another stakeholder meeting to discuss these recommendations in more depth. An overview of the main recommendations is listed below:

- Consider addition of hydrogeological report requirements, such as water properties, sources and cumulative effects.
- Consider area and timing requirements for groundwater monitoring.
- Consider fencing requirements.
- Consider contingency plans for surface and groundwater impacts.
- Consider spill prevention plans.

Mineral Resource Lands – What is a Public Park/Preserve

Within the current designation criteria for mineral resource lands, mineral resource lands must be separated at least 1,000 feet from public preserves. The current comprehensive plan criteria states:

2. *Location. Designated mineral resource lands shall be separated by a distance of at least 1,000 feet from public preserves, which include parks, national wildlife refuges, state conservation areas, wild life areas, and other government owned preserves, but excluding hunting areas.*

Some phrases within this definition have specific meaning, whereas others may be vague. In the initial analysis of the mineral lands designation criteria, the County used the Thurston County Parks layer as a basis for this parks criteria. The question was asked to the stakeholder group: what areas qualify as a public park and preserve?

Maya Teeple reviewed, at a high-level, phrases within the current definition and other potential groups that could be used to further define public parks and preserves:

- **Parks** – typically a public use area that can include a variety of uses, such as squares, trails, beaches, playgrounds, ballfields, or other facilities.
- **Wildlife Refuge, Natural Area, Conservation Area, or Preserve** – some of these terms may have a specific meaning, such as a wildlife area or natural area, whereas others may be an umbrella term (i.e., preserve). These areas are those which are devoted to the protection of wildlife or habitat. They may or may not be open to the public.

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- **Special Use Parks** – this is a subcategory within parks and is not a formal classification. It includes parks which would have non-typical uses, such as an off-road vehicle park, dog-park, boat launch, or trailheads.
- **Other Considerations** – undeveloped parks that may be developed in the future, open space areas and trails are all other considerations. Open space typically refers to government owned areas that protect a specific resource. Trails were not considered as a public park or preserve in the initial analysis for mineral lands designation.

The group looked at these considerations on several maps for discussion purposes only. The group then moved into a discussion. The following points we're raised during the meeting:

- What is the function of a park? The function of the park should determine whether it has a 1,000-foot separation distance or not. Some uses could be high impact or noisy and not warrant a 1,000-foot separation distance. Off-road vehicle parks are an example of something currently classified as a "park" that is high impact and noisy. The main points raised on this topic include:
 - What is the function of the 1,000-foot separation distance? Is this to protect noise? Water quality? Lighting?
 - Wildlife habitat and areas warrant protection by a 1,000-foot separation distance, but other uses don't.
 - Do certain types of wildlife habitat/species deserve different separation distances?
 - User-experience should be considered. How might a mineral operation next to a park impact the experience?
 - Examples were mentioned of existing, open mining operations that have trails along the ridge of a quarry and are open for public recreation. Mines can also be turned into a public park after the site is extracted. Examples include southwest of Deep Lake in Millersylvania Park, Chambers Bay Golf Course and Butchart Gardens. Some stakeholders requested examples of mined lands that have been returned to wildlife habitat.
- Should park areas owned by land trusts be included in the parks definition?
 - Land Trusts preserve land and wildlife habitat in perpetuity. They protect resources and areas that are considered at-risk. Therefore they should be included.
 - What about land trusts that are working lands and allow for agriculture/forestry?
 - Land Trusts use lands and respond to a Commission. They are non-governmental in nature. Therefore, they should not be included because they are not a public entity but rather non-governmental. Public/government agencies manage these areas for the people.
- Public vs private: Public – voting public has a say, lands managed in the interest of the general public; private – voting public doesn't have a say, lands managed in the interest of the private sector.
- Does it matter if there are industrial uses surrounding the preserve?
- Mining operations may donate land to become a public park, but there is less incentive to do so if there is a 1,000-foot separation distance from that new park land.

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- Stakeholders asked what activities are allowed in the 1,000-foot separation distance: berms, roadways, or other uses?